

ADOPT A DRIFTER PROGRAM

Background

NOAA's Office of Climate Observation (OCO) is launching an Adopt a Drifter Program (ADP) for K-16 teachers to provide an educational opportunity for teachers to infuse observing system data into their curriculum.

The start date for this Program is December 2004 during the STRATUS cruise scheduled for December 5-24 from Arica to Valparaiso, Chile.

The ADP allows one school from the United States to partner with one international school to mutually adopt a drifting buoy to be deployed from a ship at sea. A teacher from each school may be on board the ship during deployment, although this is not a prerequisite for participation in the Program. An educational sticker from each school is adhered to the drifter before deployment and photos taken to document the activity. The teachers receive an identifying number for their drifting buoy in order to access data from the drifter online. Participating teachers develop lesson plans to encourage their students to use the drifter data. Students in the teachers' classes receive a drifter tracking chart to plot the coordinates of the drifter as it moves freely in the currents. Teachers and students can make connections between the data accessed on line and other maps showing currents, winds, etc.

Since drifter data are used to track major ocean currents and eddies globally, ground truth data from satellites, build models of climate and weather patterns, and predict the movement of pollutants if dumped or accidentally spilled into the sea, it is important to understand how the data are measured, how often data are downloaded, and what data are available for schools and the general public to access. Teachers participating in this Program will better be able to describe these tasks after participating in drifter research while on board a research vessel.

December 5-24, 2004 -STRATUS cruise off coast of Chile

Mary Cook is the first Teacher at Sea to be involved in the ADP. Her school, Southside School in Batesville, Arkansas, adopted the first drifting buoy deployed on board the NOAA ship RONALD H. BROWN. Mary is partnering with Viviana Zamorano, a teacher from Arica, Chile, and her students at the Escuela America. Viviana participated in STRATUS activities during a cruise during November 2003.

For further information and to learn how to participate in the Adopt a Drifter Program, contact Diane Stanitski at diane.stanitski@noaa.gov.